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INFO WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 000019

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - CORRECTED TEXT.

AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PASS TO AMEMBASSY GRENADA
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PASS TO AMCONSUL QUEBEC
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PASS TO AMCONSUL RECIFE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/01/15
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [PINR](#) [CI](#)
SUBJECT: Chilean Presidential Candidate Pinera Exudes Confidence and
Shares Priorities with A/S Valenzuela

CLASSIFIED BY: Paul Simons, Ambassador, Department of State, EXEC;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary/Comment: Exuding confidence during his January 12 meeting with A/S Valenzuela, Sebastian Pinera pronounced that he will easily win the January 17 presidential election run-off. He outlined his intention to restore Chile's productivity and economic growth and reform health and education systems during the "critical" first six months of his administration. Citing a shared commitment to democracy and open markets, Pinera offered to partner with President Obama to revitalize the role of the U.S. in Latin America. Promising to be a dynamic leader, Pinera came across as poised, polished and well-prepared throughout the hour-long exchange. End Summary/comment.

¶2. (U) Chilean center-right Presidential candidate Sebastian Pinera hosted A/S Valenzuela at his home on January 12. Also, present were the Ambassador, Senior Poloff, and Econoff (notetaker).

Pinera Predicts He Will Be President Based on Internal Polling

¶3. (C) Likening the final days of the campaign to impatience at the end of a pregnancy, center-right Alianza presidential candidate Sebastian Pinera told A/S Valenzuela that he will win the January 17 presidential election run-off. He based his prediction on what he considered a poorly run campaign by his opponent, Eduardo Frei. He said internal campaign polling put him six points ahead of Frei. When A/S Valenzuela asked about "wild cards" in the election, Pinera mentioned an expected endorsement of his opponent, Eduardo Frei, by independent leftist Marco Enriquez-Ominami, who received 20.1% of the first round vote. However, he characterized any endorsement as too late in the election cycle and predicted its effects would be very weak. [Note: Enriquez-Ominami begrudgingly and indirectly announced his intention to vote for Frei on January ¶13. End note.] Pinera added that Alianza had done better than the government parties in December's parliamentary elections, which he interpreted as a signal that Chileans want change.

¶4. (C) Contrasting his future administration with that of President Michelle Bachelet, which he claims was bad for productivity, employment, health and education, Pinera promised to be a more dynamic leader.

"Critical" First Six Months: Recouping Growth/Productivity; Health and Education Reforms

¶5. (C) Pinera lamented that Chile had not fully realized its growth potential over the past decade, and said restoring the country's ability to grow is a priority. Saying the first six months in office are "critical," he listed employment creation and health and education reform among his top concerns. Pinera told A/S Valenzuela that he has a plan to recoup Chile's productivity and competitiveness by modernizing the state, increasing flexibility and directing resources away from unproductive sectors.

Pinera Invites President Obama to Partner to Re-Vitalize the U.S. Role in Latin America

¶6. (C) Pinera invited President Obama to partner with Chile and promised to help him to revitalize the role of the U.S. in Latin America. Responding to A/S Valenzuela's comments about the bicentennial being an opportunity to create a "new world" among some of the world's oldest republics in the northern and southern hemispheres, Pinera promoted Chile as an example of what a small country can accomplish and its potential for state-to-state collaboration. He highlighted Chile's ties to Europe through free trade agreements and its close relationship to the U.S., based on shared principles of democracy and market economics. He said this paves the way for Chile to play an important role in democracy, countering terrorism and narco-trafficking, and development.

¶7. (C) Pinera suggested that President Obama visit Chile later this year and use Santiago as a platform to lay out a "Cairo-style" speech to Latin America.

¶8. (U) The Assistant Secretary cleared this cable.
SIMONS